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BIOWARE
THE SILENT GROVE
DAVID GAIDER | ALEXANDER FREED | CHAD HARDIN

DRAGON AGE™

THE SILENT GROVE

Part 3 of 6

For nearly a decade, King Alistair of Ferelden has ruled with a steady hand, seeing to his homeland's reconstruction after the darkspawn blight. But now he has left his home behind, journeying to distant Antiva to uncover a secret kept by the mysterious Crow assassins.

Alistair is accompanied by Isabela, a notorious pirate who has a troubled history with the Crows, and Varric Tethras, a dwarven merchant with connections in every stratum of society. Spurred on by information from Prince Claudio Valisti (a powerful Crow himself), the three broke into the assassins' prison in search of Alistair's father, King Maric.

Instead, they found a strange old man . . .

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WE BROUGHT YOU OUT OF THAT PIT.
NOW IT'S TIME TO TALK.
YES, OF COURSE.
YOU WANT KING MARIC?
HE WAS MY CELLMATE.
EVERY DAY, THE CROWS TOOK HIM AWAY TO ASK QUESTIONS.
HE DON'T TELL ME WHAT THEY WANTED, AND I NEVER TOLD HIM MY CRIMES.
YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW, MAN.
IT WAS THE WITCH OF THE WILDS WHO FREED HIM.
"OUR FOURTH YEAR TOGETHER. SIX DAYS INTO SPRING. I KNOW BECAUSE I COUNTED FALCONS.
YOUR CELL GOT COLD AND THE SCREAMING FROM BELOW STOPPED.
"SOMETHING HAPPENED."
RELEASE HIM.
"THERE WERE CROWS THE NEXT MORNING, AND THIS POINT MOVE DIDN'T LOOK AT US.
"THEY CAME FOR KING MARIC, AND HE DON'T FIGHT THEM.
"I NEVER SAW THE FATHER OR THE WITCH AGAIN."

CHAPTER 3
...THE CROWS WON'T CATCH A BOAT THIS SIZE, BUT WE'LL SAIL UNTIL MORNING TO BE SURE.
HOW'S THE ARM?
BETTER.
WHAT ABOUT OUR GUEST?
GORGING HIMSELF IN THE GALLEY.
NOT THE MAN YOU WERE HOPING FOR, IS HE?
I WAS LOOKING FOR KING MARIC.
MARIC DISAPPEARED THIRTEEN YEARS AGO AT SEA.
YOUR FATHER?
THERE WAS NO TRACE OF HIM. NOTHING TO FIND -- UNTIL PRINCE CLAUDIO SENT ME EVIDENCE HE'D BEEN CAPTURED BY THE CROWS.
SO WHY'D WE RESCUE THE OLD MAN?
BECAUSE HE KNEW MARIC -- HE RECOGNIZED ME AS MARIC'S SON.
AND I NEED ANSWERS.

DAMN HER.
I MET FLEMETH IN THE KORGARI WILDS, AND SHE STARTED ME ON THE PATH TO BECOMING KING.
FLEMETH?
WE MET HER ONCE, TOO -- SHE PLAYED A FRIEND OF OURS.
BUT FLEMETH ISN'T THE ONLY WITCH OF THE WILDS.
THEY'RE AFRAID OF ANOTHER FABLE IN ANTIVA -- OR AM I WRONG?
NO.
THIS WAS YAVANA -- THE BEAST OF THE TELLARI SWAMPS.
ANOTHER WITCH?
WONDERFUL.
IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN TELL US?
BEFORE MARIC AND YAVANA DISAPPEARED, HE LEFT A MESSAGE FOR HIS SON.
I HAD CHILDREN, ONCE.
HE SAID HE HAD TO DO IT.
HE SAID HE WAS SORRY.

HE MEANT CAILAN, YOU KNOW.
HIS REAL SON.
I GREW UP TO BE A TEMPLAR, NOT A KING -- MY MOTHER WAS A SERVANT, AND MAGIC BARELY KNEW I EXISTED.
IT WASN'T SO BAD.
THEN CAILAN DIES, YOUR COUNTRY GOES TO WAR, AND YOU COME OUT A HERO.
SOMEONE HAS TO BE KING.
BUT IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ME.
I THOUGHT MY FATHER WAS A PRISONER.
IF HE ESCAPED, I NEED TO KNOW IF HE'S ALIVE.
I NEED TO KNOW...
IF HE ABANDONED YOU?
IF HE ABANDONED HIS KINGDOM.
CAN YOU TAKE ME TO THE TELLARI SWAMPS?
FOR YOU?
ANYTHING -- BUT JUST THE ONCE.
I'LL TELL THE CREW TO SET COURSE.

ANGELMO! CELSO! HANDS OUT OF YOUR TROUSERS AND UP ON THE MAST!
SHE'S DIFFERENT WHEN SHE'S BEING CAPTAIN.
I SORT OF LIKE IT.
AND SO WE SET SAIL TOWARD TELLARI.
WE STOP IN SELENY AND LET THE OLD MAN DEPART WITH A PURSE FULL OF COINS. VARRIC TRIES TO HIRE A GUIDE, BUT NOBODY WILL COME -- NOT FOR A PITTANCE, NOT FOR A FORTUNE.
OMINOUS, THAT.
DURING THE DAY, THE CREW STAYS FOCUSED -- ISABELA MAKES SURE OF IT -- AND AT NIGHT, THE ONES FROM ANTIVA TELL GHOST STORIES ABOUT THE SWAMPS.
THEY TALK ABOUT BEAST MEN AND THE UNBORN CHILDREN OF DROWNED GIRLS, WITH VARRIC ON HAND TO ADD LURID ELABORATION.
IT GETS EASY TO FORGET THAT SOME MONSTERS ARE REAL.
WHEN THE CREW STOPS LAUGHING, NONE OF THEM OFFERS TO COME ALONG.

I KEEP HEARING SOMETHING...
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME, O KING?
LET'S SAY, "MORE THAN YOU'D LIKE, AND LESS THAN I OUGHT TO."
FINE ANSWER.
AND I'M TOLD YOUR BUSINESS WITH THE MERCHANTS' GUILD IS A COVER FOR YOUR TRADE IN SECRETS.
OR WAS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?
STORIES, NOT SECRETS.
ANYWAY, THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.
AND SHE'S HERE BECAUSE SHE THINKS YOU NEED A GROWNUP.
BUT PRINCE CLAUDIO WAS RIGHT - YOU DON'T TRUST US, AND THERE MUST BE OTHER PEOPLE YOU COULD'VE TAKEN.
WERE YOU WORRIED YOUR LOYAL SUBJECTS WOULD KEEP YOU FROM DOING WHAT YOU CAME TO DO?
OR AFRAID THEY'D LET YOU GET AWAY WITH IT?
BLOODY SWAMPS...

I FOUND ANIMAL TRACKS, BUT THAT'S ALL.
WHAT ARE WE EVEN LOOKING FOR?
SOMETHING UNUSUAL.
LIKE A WITCH WAVING AROUND A BROOMSTICK?
THAT WOULD DO.
OR A CROCODILE GNAWING ON OUR CORPSES?
NOT SO MUCH THAT.
THAT SOUND IS GETTING CLOSER.
CCRRRRRRRRRK
WHAT DO WE DO?
BROWN OUR TROUSERS.

DOES THIS COUNT AS UNUSUAL?

HRRAH!
YOU NEED TO RUN.
NOW.
GRAH!

NO...
YAVANA?
...I AM YAVANA.
TO BE CONTINUED!

IN MY LIFE SO FAR, I'VE TAKEN SWORD TO THREE DRAGONS.
GET OUT OF HERE...
THE BIG ONES, I MEAN -- NOT THE ONES THAT LOOK LIKE SCALY, TOOTHY DOGS AND LOVE HORSE MEAT, BUT THE *HIGH DRAGONS* THAT MAKE THE EARTH SHAKE.
NOT EVEN *DARKSPAWN* ARE THAT SAVAGE.
A DRAGON FEEDS ON ANYTHING. A DRAGON EXISTS ONLY TO KILL.
IT'S NOT ATTACKING...?

DRAGON AGE™ II

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